

An important coastal wader feeding area in southern Somalia

The coast of southern Somalia from the Kismaayo area northeast to Mogadishu is characterized by long sandy beaches, with small stretches of rock and seaweed patches associated with coral headlands. It lacks extensive intertidal coral feeding areas for waders such as those typical of much of the Kenya coast. There is no protective reef and beaches are subject to strong wave action. Numbers of Palaearctic waders are therefore rather low. For example, I was able to count only 400–450, mainly Sanderling (scientific names are given below), Turnstone and Greater Sandplover, on two drives along 25 km of beach from Marka northeastwards during November 1987. Contrasting with this picture is a tidal lagoon at Kismaayo which holds thousands of waders, and which must represent an important wintering and passage stopover site.

Kismaayo lagoon is approximately circular and about 2 km across, opening directly to the sea through a narrow neck between coral headlands. It consists of exposed sandflats at low tide, with a few scattered mangroves, but at high tide it is completely covered. I counted waders in the area at and after high tide on 26 March 1987, when waders were concentrated in a few large gatherings on the steep surrounding beach, and were beginning to move back to the edge of the flats. Approximately 4000 waders were present, with counts of individual species as follows:

Curlew Sandpiper <i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	2500
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	300
Little Stint <i>Calidris minuta</i>	300
Greater Sandplover <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	200
Mongolian Sandplover <i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	200
Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	200
Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	60
Terek Sandpiper <i>Xenus cinereus</i>	50
Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	50
Crab Plover <i>Dromas ardeola</i>	50
Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	30
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	15
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	8
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	4
Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	3
Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	3
Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>	1

Similar numbers were seen on a subsequent visit on 11 November 1987, when two Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* and two Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* were also present.

The numbers at Kismaayo were almost as high as those which utilize the best known Kenya coast tidal flats site at Mida Creek, where roosting counts of wintering waders have been within the range 4000–6000 (Bryant 1980, Pearson 1984). At Mida, the Curlew Sandpiper is again the predominant species, with many Sandplovers and Little Stints. Here, though, the larger waders—Grey Plover, Whimbrel, Curlew, Crab Plover and

Greenshank—are more numerous, and there are few Sanderlings or Turnstones. Moreover, Kentish Plover is not found regularly this far south.

Between Kismaayo and the Kenya border there are other coastal sites that might hold important numbers of waders, notably the large lagoons at Bur Gabo, and these need to be investigated. North of Kismaayo, however, the feeding possibilities for species such as Curlew Sandpiper and Little Stint are perhaps very limited for hundreds of kilometres along the east-facing Somalia coast.

References

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- PEARSON, D.J. 1984. Some counts of wintering waders on the south Kenya coast. *Scopus* 8: 93–95.

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Observations on the behaviour and call of Hartlaub's Bustard *Eupodotis hartlaubii*

In mid-November 1984, observations were made of three male Hartlaub's Bustards *Eupodotis hartlaubii* in tall grassland with scattered *Acacia drepanolobium* close to Lion Dip in Nairobi National Park, Kenya. The bustards were easy to observe from a motor vehicle at distances down to 10 m.

Several species of bustards Otididae, belonging to the genus *Eupodotis*, are well known from dramatic aerial displays which are often referred to as 'rocket' or 'parachute' flights (Urban *et al.* 1986). Such a display has not, however, been described for Hartlaub's Bustard (Osborne *et al.* 1984). Nevertheless, it was in part due to these flights that our attention was drawn to the birds. The displaying males were visible over long distances, their flights revealing striking white plumage in the wings that was largely hidden at rest. The bustards flew up steeply to 15–20 m, and then descended with a glide, their wings widely spread and slightly raised, their legs dangling.

Virtually nothing is known of the breeding behaviour of Hartlaub's Bustard (Urban *et al.* 1986) and although we are unable to throw any light on its context, we describe here a call sequence in detail. Males adopted an alert stance, sufficiently distinct to allow an observer to expect calling to follow. The head was then drawn slowly down on to the back,

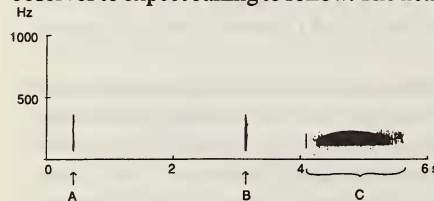


Fig. 1. Sonogram of the call of a male Hartlaub's Bustard *Eupodotis hartlaubii*